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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 14 July 2004, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Penjo (Vice-President) ..... (Bhutan)

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In the absence of Ms. Risa (Finland), Mr. Penjo (Bhutan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance (*continued*) (A/59/93-E/2004/74, A/59/86-E/2004/69)

1. **Mr. Essel** (Ghana) said that natural disasters and human conflict disrupted lives, destroyed property and set back development. Unlike natural disasters, however, human conflicts were largely avoidable and their consequences could be managed so as to mitigate the hardships suffered by victims. It was therefore essential for the international community to take diplomatic initiatives and devise early warning mechanisms to pre-empt violent conflict, especially in developing countries, so as to preserve infrastructure and limited human and material resources. Recent conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and Côte d'Ivoire had brought untold hardships to the civilian population, and had disrupted state institutions, thus hindering progress towards regional economic integration. Ghana had been working assiduously through the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union and other international forums to help prevent conflicts in the West African subregion and elsewhere in Africa. There was still much to be done in West Africa to disarm and demobilize armed groups and to control the proliferation and cross-border trafficking of small arms. ECOWAS was working with United Nations agencies and other friendly countries on the delivery of humanitarian assistance and on planning a response to the transitional requirements of the countries concerned. In that context, he welcomed the contingency planning strategies devised by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC).

2. Ghana appreciated the emphasis being placed on strengthening national capacities for preparedness and response to natural disasters, and was maintaining its own capacity, which could be boosted with outside assistance if needed. It also welcomed the efforts to integrate gender concerns into humanitarian responses. Gender mainstreaming should be stepped up, in view of the unique vulnerability of women and children. Ghana supported the efforts of the Secretary-General to prevent and respond to incidents of abuse by civilian and military personnel working with the United Nations or its partners. As a major troop-contributing country, Ghana was conscious of the importance of the prevailing codes of conduct for military and police officers.

3. As HIV/AIDS continued to decimate societies already undermined by natural disasters and conflict, it was vital to include HIV/AIDS prevention and management strategies in humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian personnel should inform affected populations of the goals of their activities, and ensure that their behaviour conformed both to those goals and to local norms and practices. Funding for humanitarian activities was uneven, leaving some countries substantially underfinanced. His delegation hoped that that problem would be addressed through the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative.

4. His delegation appreciated the response of United Nations agencies, in partnership with ECOWAS, to West Africa's cross-border issues. The region was now in a critical phase of transition, from relief to recovery and development, which called for sustained action on repatriation, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

5. **Mr. Siv** (United States of America) emphasized the problem of access by aid workers to communities in need. Although the Islamic Republic of Iran, following the earthquake in Bam, had quickly opened its borders to relief agencies and supplies, including a team from the United States, in the Sudan the Government had for months delayed access to the Darfur region, which was currently experiencing the world's worst humanitarian crisis. People there were dying as the violence continued, and up to a million could die in the months to come from exposure, malnutrition and disease. The United States was committed to addressing both the root causes of the tragedy, and the immediate needs of the suffering people. Since February 2003, it had provided over US$ 150 million in relief assistance for the Sudan, and had deployed numerous relief personnel including a 13-person Disaster Assistance Response Team on the ground. His country sought to be a good donor, irrespective of political objectives and regardless of the media profile of the crisis in question.

6. The United States supported the core humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. The first priority must be humanitarian action; that response could not be compromised or delayed by efforts to achieve overall

coherence. At the same time, the United States expected United Nations agencies to act coherently. A collaborative approach was especially important in tackling the problem of internally displaced persons in Darfur.

7. The United States was dedicated to reducing the world's vulnerability to natural hazards. It strongly supported the International Strategy on Disaster Reduction, and encouraged Member States to attend the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in January 2005.

8. **Mr. Sinaga** (Indonesia) welcomed the increasing numbers of regional peacekeepers providing humanitarian support. Noting also the increased recruitment of private contractors to manage and distribute relief, and the involvement of armed forces in relief and reconstruction, he emphasized that ground rules were needed to govern the provision of assistance by such means, as well as relations between civilian and military personnel, and coordination. In view of the increasingly interrelated nature of humanitarian problems, a stronger and more coherent international response was needed to such challenges as food insecurity, HIV/AIDS and weakened governance. His delegation was gravely concerned that the number of refugees under the responsibility of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had risen to almost 10 million. He hoped all the agencies would work together to bring down the number of refugees and internally displaced persons.

9. Humanitarian operations must be conducted in strict compliance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality. Humanitarian assistance should be provided with the consent of the affected country and with respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of States. The affected State should play the primary role in coordinating relief efforts. Unless those principles were observed, humanitarian operations could be undermined and lives put at risk. Sensitivity to local cultures and conditions would be enhanced if overlap between international humanitarian efforts and those conducted by the Government and local community could be avoided. Member States should provide more resources for humanitarian assistance, without confusing it with peace or economic development.

10. **Mr. Lopez-Clemente** (Cuba) said that the frequent humanitarian crises in the modern world were taking place against a backdrop of inequality and growing threats to peace and development. In a unipolar international system where hegemony was exercised through the "preventive" use of armed force, Cuba reaffirmed the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality laid down in General Assembly resolution 46/182. The need to provide assistance to millions of people must not become a pretext for rewriting international law and for flouting the sovereignty of States in order to serve the interests of a small group of powerful countries. The "responsibility to protect" and "humanitarian intervention" did not advance peace and international security; they merely complicated inter-State relations. Only too often, the countries promoting that agenda ignored or were even complicit with violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law. There were many documented cases of arbitrary detentions, extrajudicial executions, torture, sexual abuse and other cruel treatment of prisoners in the context of the so-called war on terror. It could hardly be expected that local populations would respond favourably to "humanitarian" operations performed by people who were responsible for unilateral aggression under false pretexts. Those considerations must be taken into account by those who advocated so-called "integrated missions". Humanitarian assistance must be independent, neutral and impartial and must not be linked in any way to military forces of occupation. The increasing use of mercenaries from private security companies was a further concern. The only guarantee that people in need could obtain the necessary assistance was strict compliance with the Charter of the United Nations and with international law.

11. Natural disasters tended to occur in the poorest countries, whose vulnerability was made worse by poverty and underdevelopment. Enhanced prevention, mitigation and preparation, as well as a prompt international response to requests from affected countries, were essential. He emphasized the importance of the transition from relief from development, and of providing humanitarian assistance in the most effective ways, in line with humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law.

12. **Mr. Shamaa** (Observer for Egypt) condemned the attacks against relief workers and United Nations relief personnel which had taken place over the past year; those acts were contrary to the rules of international law prohibiting war crimes. The

international community must provide sufficient funds for disaster relief. Humanitarian assistance should be available equally to all disaster victims, and its provision should not depend on how the media reflected particular situations. Victims should never be used as human shields. The rights of civilians must be protected, and violators of their rights must be held responsible by the international community. The Council and the General Assembly both had a duty to enunciate the principles governing humanitarian assistance and the protection of civilians in armed conflicts, as the Assembly had done in resolution 46/182. His country firmly supported current donor initiatives, and hoped for larger flows of financial assistance for disaster relief. The United Nations and its specialized agencies should help countries in the task of capacity-building, as well as in reconstruction and development. All humanitarian assistance should be neutral and impartial, and be provided with respect for State sovereignty and in conformity with international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

13. The international community should intervene to meet the needs of the Palestinian people. Thousands of Palestinians had been killed in the occupied territories and the Golan; property, buildings and infrastructure had been destroyed. He hoped that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, acting in collaboration with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, would submit a report on the situation, and that a resolution would be adopted by the Council and the General Assembly to provide the necessary humanitarian assistance.

14. **Mr. Dauth** (Australia) noted with sadness the loss of a number of United Nations humanitarian workers in the line of duty during the previous year. The delivery of humanitarian assistance had become more difficult and dangerous. Australia was continuing to provide rapid and generous support for the victims of crises and disasters, both within its own region and worldwide. Its highest priority was the Asia and Pacific region, which was too often affected by disasters, and his delegation encouraged the United Nations to focus on the role it could play there. Useful lessons could be learned from the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands, which was a coordinated regional effort to prevent conflict, respond to humanitarian needs and assist in post-conflict reconstruction.

15. Seven issues were especially important for Australia: security and access for humanitarian personnel through effective risk management; the protection of civilians in conflict situations; the integration of humanitarian assistance into broader United Nations missions, in collaboration with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; support for countries in transition, in which Australia was anxious to play a role; more effective responses to natural disasters, especially through the integration of disaster preparedness and mitigation measures into national development strategies; gender analysis and mainstreaming; recognizing the critical role played by women as agents of change and as peace builders; and strengthening the humanitarian coordinator system so that field operations could be made more effective. Australia would continue to work with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and with agencies within and outside the United Nations system in order to strengthen humanitarian policy and advocacy.

16. **Mr. Grunewald** (Namibia) said that his country was battling interrelated humanitarian problems, including income inequality, abject poverty and food shortages as a result of recurrent drought and floods, compounded by the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS. All those factors undermined development gains and efforts to eradicate poverty. His delegation therefore shared the Secretary-General's view that HIV/AIDS intervention should be integrated into humanitarian planning and programming, including in vulnerability assessments, and should cut across humanitarian and development lines to focus on long-term solutions.

17. While he welcomed the progress made under the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative, he was concerned that the number of countries requiring humanitarian assistance due to complex emergencies remained constant and that funding levels for humanitarian assistance remained uneven, leaving some countries substantially underfunded. The decline in humanitarian assistance channelled through the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) was also a real cause for concern. Accordingly, his delegation endorsed the call for an increase in unearmarked, predictable funding for relief assistance and believed that urgent action was needed to strengthen the coordination of United Nations humanitarian assistance.

18. The importance of investing in and further developing national capacities for early disaster warning, preparedness and response, particularly in disaster-prone areas, could not be overemphasized. The efforts of the United Nations to identify practical ways for channelling resources in support of national and regional disaster management capacities should also be strengthened, as should efforts to integrate a gender perspective into the planning, programming and implementation of humanitarian activities. The objective should be to help move national agendas from relief and dependency towards recovery, self-reliance and sustainable development.

19. **Ms. Mills** (Jamaica) expressed concern over the uneven pattern of funding for humanitarian activities, noting that greater emphasis should be placed on equity in the distribution of such assistance. In that regard, the recommendation that donors should make available increased amounts of unearmarked, predictable funding for relief assistance, including in the transition phase, deserved special consideration, as did the suggestion that they should also explore means to fund all critical needs across sectors. The objective should be to identify durable solutions in addressing not only the effects of humanitarian emergencies but also their causes. Every effort should be made to ensure that the provision of funds, especially in the context of assessing post-conflict needs, did not impose additional conditionalities on recipient countries. Furthermore, such assistance should not be to the detriment of resources being made available for development activities, neither should it be used as a substitute for development assistance.

20. Promoting capacity-building at the local, national and regional levels was of paramount importance. To that end, international cooperation in support of the efforts of affected States in dealing with natural disasters and complex emergencies was critical. Assisting developing countries in their efforts to strengthen disaster preparedness and management capabilities as well as to develop early warning and prevention mechanisms was particularly important. Although the United Nations system was increasingly attempting to build capacity at the national, regional and global levels, programming had not been as extensive or wide-ranging as it should be, due in part to the comparatively low level of funding provided for capacity-building in disaster reduction and recovery.

21. Strengthening coordination and coherence within the United Nations system as well as with national partners was vital for the provision of humanitarian assistance. Jamaica's recent experience in providing assistance to Haitians seeking refuge in the country, following the eruption of violence in Haiti, bore testimony to that fact. However, great care must be taken to ensure that the coordination function, especially in the context of increased humanitarian actors, did not become the most important function of humanitarian efforts. In that regard, the blurred distinction between military and humanitarian operations and the lack of coordination with the broader humanitarian and development community raised several concerns as it compromised the perception of the neutrality of humanitarian assistance and could have implications for the safety and security of personnel on the ground. There was a need for further dialogue between States and humanitarian actors on the respective roles and complementarity among humanitarian, political and peacekeeping actors in response to crises. All personnel should be sensitive to national and local customs and traditions. The Secretary-General's recommendations would advance prospects for ensuring that the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality, as well as full respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, remained the central pillars of the humanitarian assistance framework.

22. **Mr. Gouveia** (Mozambique) said that humanitarian assistance must be carried out within the framework of the guiding principles of General Assembly resolution 46/182, as well as other relevant decisions of the General Assembly and of the Council. Humanitarian assistance operations should be impartial and focus on empowering local communities, with international partners playing a supportive role. There was no doubt that in dealing with emergencies, national capacity should be capable of providing the first line of defence; priority should therefore be given to the development of national prevention, mitigation, preparedness and management capacities that could ultimately prove to be the most cost-effective.

23. In Mozambique the compounding effects of HIV/AIDS on cyclical natural disasters had significantly increased the vulnerability of the population that was still in need of humanitarian assistance, despite the positive gains made in recent years. Noting that HIV/AIDS was a growing threat to

sustainable development and that without an aggressive response to combat it 20 per cent of the agricultural labour force would be lost to the disease by 2020, with life expectancy dropping to 36 years by 2010, he said that humanitarian problems must be addressed in an integrated manner, covering a development dimension in addition to emergency relief. The issue of transition from relief to development was also of critical importance, since it could ensure an end to vulnerability and dependency on emergency aid and enable recipient countries to develop the necessary tools to cope with future disasters.

24. Complementarity between emergency relief and development activities continued to be of critical importance and must be central to any development cooperation strategy. In that regard, he hoped that the resolution on assistance to Mozambique to be tabled during the upcoming session of the General Assembly would not only focus on humanitarian assistance, but also reflect the main political, social and economic aspects of the country and constitute an instrument for the further mobilization of humanitarian and development assistance for Mozambique. He welcomed the critical role played by the country's development partners and hoped that Mozambique could count on their continued assistance to ensure that the political, economic and social gains made to date would be sustainable and irreversible.

25. **Mr. Musambachime** (Observer for Zambia) said that Africa was tackling some of the most complex humanitarian disasters, such as the crisis in the Darfur region of the Sudan while southern Africa, which was just emerging from a major crisis, remained vulnerable as HIV/AIDS, poverty and food shortages still needed considerable attention. Long-term needs must be addressed if another humanitarian crisis was to be averted.

26. While his delegation welcomed the initiatives by the United Nations system to enhance coordination with respect to a number of important issues, much still remained to be done in terms of policy, financial resources and field level operations. Not much coordination had been achieved with regard to gender issues; there should be increased reporting on the integration of gender perspectives in the planning, programming and implementation of humanitarian activities. Zambia deplored acts of sexual abuse and exploitation, especially in the context of peacekeeping and humanitarian relief operations, the result most probably of poor oversight in the area of operations. Accordingly, Member States and humanitarian and peacekeeping missions should work together to eliminate incidents of sexual abuse; his delegation supported the incorporation of the core principles enshrined in the Secretary-General's bulletin in the standards and codes of conduct for troops and police forces.

27. Greater coordination was also needed in the protection of civilians in armed conflict, a shared responsibility of all actors involved. The African Union had appointed a special representative for the protection of civilians in armed conflict, which should make it easier for the United Nations to coordinate its actions in that regard in Africa. While the refugee situation might be improving as a result of the repatriation exercise being carried out in many countries, the plight of internally displaced persons, estimated at 25 million, was still a source of great concern. Much more must be done in that regard to ensure that coordination extended from policy to actual operations.

28. Turning to capacity-building, he noted that developing countries needed increased support to build capacity for effective response to natural disasters. Capacity-building should also be extended to regional institutions that were helping Member States cope with natural disaster preparedness and response. In that regard, the long-term effects or consequences of those emergencies should also be factored into any given response.

29. While the Central Emergency Revolving Fund was an important financial tool for emergency response, it was insufficient to meet the needs of affected countries and regions. In that regard, it might be helpful for the Council to be provided with comprehensive information on the amounts of humanitarian funding system-wide, so that it could take informed decisions concerning the allocation and resource mobilization of the Fund. Noting that disasters required that funds should be sufficient, timely and readily accessible if lives were to be saved, he supported the recommendation to increase the emergency cash grant to US$ 100,000 per country within existing regular budget resources.

30. **Mr. Blanco Dominguez** (Observer for the Dominican Republic), noting that his country was highly vulnerable to natural disasters, which impeded

economic development and hampered poverty reduction efforts, said that, while his Government had established clearly defined national policies for preventing and mitigating natural disasters, social and economic pressures forced people to live in unstable regions and in inadequate housing, frustrating the risk prevention and mitigation efforts. The recent tragedy in the province of Independencia bore testimony to that situation. However, thanks to support from the national and international communities, emergency humanitarian assistance had been provided in a timely and efficient manner.

31. Developing countries urgently needed technological and scientific assistance from the developed countries to help them combat the harmful effects of natural disasters. While national Governments and relief agencies were primarily responsible for the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance, there was an urgent need to eliminate the bureaucratic barriers that nearly always delayed the multilateral humanitarian response.

32. He expressed concern over the lack of specific national capacity-building programmes and over the financial difficulties of the Office for the Coordinator of Humanitarian Affairs, which should set up and regulate regional and local agencies for the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance to complement the work of regional search-and-rescue groups. The main participants should be national and local governments, financing institutions and non-governmental and civil society organizations, which could mobilize, without conditionalities and political limitations, sufficient human resources and funds to respond promptly and in a transparent manner to the frequent emergency situations that occurred in developing countries. His delegation endorsed the recommendation to raise cash grant maximums to US$ 100,000. He appealed to the international community, traditional and non-traditional donors alike, to provide more untied aid to the specialized agencies.

33. **Mr. Rivas de Zubiria** (Colombia) said that the humanitarian work of the United Nations system and its partners should be carried out in strict compliance with international humanitarian law and the principles of neutrality, humanity and impartiality. Humanitarian assistance must never be politicized or rendered in a manner that aggravated the vulnerability of countries and their peoples. It could be offered only at the request of the recipient State, and with its consent, and it must not only appear neutral and impartial, but actually be so.

34. In Colombia, President Uribe's policy of democratic security had demonstrated that through the strengthening of the rule of law and of democratic institutions, the security of the population could be increased and solutions could be found to humanitarian challenges. Internal displacement had decreased by 48 per cent over the past year; however, that accomplishment had not been recognized in the report of the Secretary-General (A/59/93-E/2004/74). His Government remained committed to reducing internal displacement and was counting on the support of all Colombians, as well as the assistance of the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, donor countries and non-governmental organizations. It applied the guiding principles of guaranteeing the willingness, security and dignity of returning displaced populations, and following up after their return to ensure the sustainability of the process.

35. **Mr. Simancas** (Observer for Mexico) said that the guiding principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality which governed humanitarian assistance both at times of natural disaster and in complex emergencies should be combined with full respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of the beneficiary State. It was also essential to guarantee free and unimpeded access to all persons in need of humanitarian assistance. States had the primary responsibility for initiating, organizing, coordinating and providing humanitarian assistance and facilitating the work of humanitarian organizations. At the same time, international cooperation to deal with natural disasters and complex emergencies needed to be strengthened, with a focus on prevention and on long-term development. Resources for humanitarian assistance must not be limited by political, economic, military or other considerations.

36. The United Nations should strike a careful balance between emergency assistance and prevention, and should work to improve early warning and preparedness. It should lead the international community in coordinating efforts to assist affected countries in line with the priorities set by the countries themselves, taking into account the most vulnerable sectors of society. In natural disasters, the United Nations should pay particular attention to developing and least developed countries.

37. Member States should strengthen their commitment to honour the principles and norms of international humanitarian law and fulfil their responsibility to take effective measures for preventing and eliminating threats to peace. Similarly, they should guarantee the safety and access of humanitarian personnel, who, in turn, must respect local laws, culture and customs. The increase in deliberate attacks against humanitarian personnel was alarming; Mexico had therefore supported the adoption of Security Council resolution 1502 (2003). The Council and the General Assembly must work to strengthen coordination and develop general principles and policies, on the basis of experience on the ground. The International Criminal Court could also play a fundamental role in putting an end to impunity, while strictly observing the principle of complementarity which gave priority to national jurisdictions.

38. **Mr. Mirafzal** (Observer for the Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his Government deeply appreciated the assistance provided by the international community to the survivors of the Bam earthquake. That disaster had demonstrated the importance of transparent and reliable communication and information management during emergency response to disasters. Public announcements of pledges and donations that were unlikely to materialize could create unfounded expectations among the affected population and discourage other potential local and international donors from providing support, and also cause confusion with regard to the registration of contributions and reporting at national and international levels.

39. With natural disasters and complex emergency situations mostly occurring in the developing countries, the operational activities of the United Nations system should become its actual development mission and mandate. The World Conference on Disaster Reduction would provide an opportunity to address the question of risk reduction with a view to promoting development activities in the framework of capacity-building.

40. The primary responsibility of protecting and assisting civilians lay with national Governments, and the international community had an important role in assisting their efforts. However, in cases where Governments lacked the institutions and structures to meet their responsibilities, or territories within a country were under factional domination, the international community should intervene and provide support. In such cases, the United Nations should be in charge of coordinating humanitarian assistance in accordance with international law and key humanitarian principles, and should provide support and protection and prevent confusion among humanitarian actors which could endanger the overall humanitarian operation. It was important to monitor the activities of the various humanitarian players and their personnel to ensure protection of vulnerable groups.

41. On the question of security in humanitarian actions, he said that external humanitarian assistance should be complementary to the existing local capacities; inappropriate external action posed a risk to the security of the population and the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance. Security was an issue not only for international staff but also for other humanitarian players such as beneficiaries, local staff, host Government staff and the corporate sector. For that reason, the causes of security risks must be identified and addressed at the individual, organizational and community levels. The measures taken must be based on an understanding of the impact on the local community and the commitment of the international humanitarian community, with due regard for the need for diversity.

42. **Mr. Sharma** (Observer for Nepal) stressed the importance of a comprehensive approach to humanitarian assistance, which was vital to finding reliable solutions to humanitarian problems. The focus must be on ensuring a seamless transition from relief to development in order to prevent and mitigate recurrent disasters. However, short-term emergencies should not divert the international community's attention and resources away from the long-term need to address issues of poverty, illiteracy, HIV/AIDS and discrimination, which compounded complex humanitarian emergencies.

43. The amount of resources allocated to humanitarian assistance was insufficient. Additional resources must be provided, but the United Nations also had an obligation to use available resources optimally. To that end, there must be strengthened coordination within the United Nations system and between the system and other humanitarian actors to avoid waste. Moreover, as the primary responsibility for responding to natural disasters rested with the affected countries, national capacity-building was vital. The United Nations must also focus on building

regional capacities, so that help would not be too far away in times of difficulty.

44. Within the United Nations system, efficiency should be sought through joint planning, information and analysis sharing and common procurement. High-profile complex emergencies should not detract attention from serious humanitarian situations elsewhere. There was a need for a holistic approach to facilitate a judicious division of attention and resources. Humanitarian assistance should not be used as a vehicle to undermine the territorial or political sovereignty of any country, no matter how rich or poor, large or small. Moreover, allegations of sexual abuse must be investigated by the Council, in conjunction with the competent bodies.

45. **Mr. Ainchil** (Argentina) expressed deep concern about the problems of limited access of humanitarian workers to populations in need, attacks against civilian populations and the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. While his delegation recognized the difficulties faced by humanitarian personnel in some conflicts, especially in the case of integrated missions or parallel humanitarian and military missions, it could not accept the existence of such difficulties as justification for attacks against such personnel.

46. The Council should devote more attention to the question of the protection of civilians in armed conflicts. As his delegation had indicated in the Security Council, no security consideration could take precedence over the primary obligation of all States to comply with the basic norms of international humanitarian law. The obligation to protect the civilian population also extended to other non-State actors who aspired to international legitimacy. Similarly, the war against terrorism must be waged in compliance with international human rights law.

47. Because of the magnitude and complexity of humanitarian emergencies, national efforts were often insufficient to meet the needs of affected populations; indifference to such emergencies could not be an option for the international community. His delegation fully endorsed the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/59/93-E/2004/74). Flexibility, coordination and communication were essential elements in the provision of humanitarian assistance. In order to achieve flexibility, broad mandates were required for humanitarian organizations and a generous interpretation of current legal instruments, as well as the availability of increased amounts of unearmarked funding for assistance. The Council's coordinating role in humanitarian affairs must be further strengthened, and the possibility considered of resuming the humanitarian segment of the substantive session later in the year if required. It was important to improve communication channels between the United Nations system and Member States; the convening of periodic briefings and open-ended consultations with all humanitarian actors would contribute to a better understanding of the needs on the ground.

48. **Mr. Israfilov** (Azerbaijan) said that the Council's discussion of the transition from relief to development had contributed to an enhanced understanding of how the United Nations and other humanitarian actors responded to the needs of States affected by armed conflict. The previous day's panel discussion could have been more productive had more time been allotted to interaction between the panellists and Council members; nevertheless, a number of recommendations and useful ideas had been presented, and he hoped that the Council would continue its consideration of the issue of transition in future substantive sessions. Azerbaijan was particularly pleased by the focus on local capacity-building in disaster-prone and affected areas, and encouraged the United Nations to further strengthen its efforts in developing risk and vulnerability assessment tools.

49. The most vivid indicator of the adequacy of international humanitarian response to needs of refugees and internally displaced persons was its impact on improving their living conditions. Despite considerable international response efforts, an alarmingly high number of affected persons still did not receive sufficient protection and assistance, and there was a strong need for concerted action by the international community. Azerbaijan was therefore encouraged by positive developments in a number of areas under the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative, which he hoped would ensure that humanitarian assistance was provided in accordance with humanitarian principles and in proportion to the needs of affected countries, regardless of the protracted nature or political circumstances of the emergency situation.

50. **Mr. Graisse** (World Food Programme (WFP)) said that the WFP had been put to extraordinary tests in 2003, fighting hunger in a world beset by violent

conflict, terrorism, natural disasters and the unyielding pandemic of HIV/AIDS. The year had begun with unprecedented global needs, which had soon grown sharply. By the end of the year, WFP had delivered more than twice as much as in 2002, to more than 100 million persons in 81 countries. Even excluding the Iraq emergency, the largest operation ever undertaken by WFP, the volume of food moved was up by 35 per cent.

51. WFP believed that the coordination arrangements established by General Assembly resolution 46/182, including IASC and CAP, had proven that collaboration between diverse humanitarian actors was both possible and necessary for providing an effective response to crisis situations. In most food emergencies, there were other urgent needs in the areas of health, nutrition, water and sanitation, education, and agriculture, that were essential to ensuring that food aid made a maximum impact and could be phased out as soon as possible. Donors must continue their efforts to fund all critical needs across all sectors.

52. Coordination among humanitarian partners was an absolute necessity for meeting the needs of beneficiaries. WFP had been playing a leading role in support of humanitarian coordination by acting as the custodian for critical humanitarian common services, such as the United Nations Joint Logistics Centre. It also provided support to a variety of users through the WFP humanitarian air services. In 2003, nearly 150,000 passengers had been transported, along with more than 100,000 metric tons of cargo, in crisis areas. Another area of WFP involvement was the management of the United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot, which had responsibility for the urgent dispatch of humanitarian relief items throughout the world.

53. **Mr. Dall'oglio** (International Organization for Migration (IOM)), said that IOM, which was a member of IASC, had become a specialist in a number of activities relevant to both emergency situations and transition phases. IOM supported the recommendations of the Secretary-General on strengthening the coordination of emergency assistance and, in that regard, believed that considerable efforts had been made over recent months to improve the combined capacities of humanitarian actors to provide a more timely, predictable and coordinated response to crises of internal displacement, starting with a more pro-active field level response.

54. In dealing with internal displacement, IASC had opted for an inter-agency "collaborative approach" as the most appropriate modality for the mobilization of a broad range of expertise. Under the leadership of the Emergency Relief Coordinator the commitment to the collaborative approach had gained momentum and a number of relevant tools to assist in its implementation had been developed. Coordination could be a challenging process, particularly for smaller operational agencies such as IOM but, with goodwill and a determined resolve to achieve tangible results, it could produce the comprehensive and multidisciplinary response that was required to appropriately tackle many complex emergencies, such as had arisen in Iraq and the Sudan.

55. A more robust security management system was clearly required under the current circumstances, yet humanitarian agencies could not operate under a "siege" mentality. It was to be hoped that the discussions on a new unified security system would take due account of the conditions necessary for the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Similarly, the issue of resources available for security was a matter of serious concern since IOM and many of its partners were facing severe constraints in raising the additional resources to meet new security standards, in particular when those were core costs not covered by assessed contributions.

56. **Ms. Delargy** (United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)) said that although the number of international refugees appeared to have fallen in recent years, the plight of victims of armed conflict or natural disasters still required the urgent attention of the international community. The deterioration of security for humanitarian actors was extremely troubling, and ultimately meant that those in need of humanitarian support often lost access to such assistance. UNFPA was concerned about the impact of the mixing of humanitarian, political and military objectives, which had affected perceptions in many parts of the world regarding the role of the United Nations and the humanitarian agencies, and was prepared to participate in a serious consideration of that issue.

57. UNFPA supported the efforts of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to ensure that the humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality remained a fundamental consideration in the design and implementation of United Nations integrated missions, recognizing that national and local contexts

varied, but that humanitarian space and neutrality must be protected in order to safely provide support to vulnerable populations. It also encouraged improved understanding and participation of local communities in all aspects of humanitarian and post-conflict programme planning to strengthen local ownership, consolidate peaceful collaboration among communities and to ensure that initiatives were appropriate and effective. It welcomed the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative and attempts by donors to improve the reliability and timeliness of their support for humanitarian needs, and it also endorsed, and pledged participation in, the initiatives for the development of common needs assessments within the consolidated appeals framework. UNFPA could make a valuable contribution in the collection and analysis of demographic data for the planning and implementation of humanitarian assistance in every sector.

58. With regard to peacekeeping missions, UNFPA wished to underscore the positive roles that mission staff, including military contingents, could play in the prevention of both HIV/AIDS and sexual exploitation, and in raising awareness of the importance of respect for gender equity and responsible conduct. The tragedy of conflict and displacement should not be compounded by the tragedy and burden of HIV/AIDS. Not only should the epidemic be considered in all aspects of humanitarian response, but it must also be a strong component of transition planning. It had been shown that post-conflict environments were most conducive to the epidemic, yet, even simple programmes to ensure safe blood supply, carry out universal precautions, and integrate prevention remained underresourced, despite the expansion of resources available to HIV/AIDS treatment globally.

59. As a member of IASC, the Fund had sought to ensure that the importance of reproductive health was recognized as an integral part of the United Nations humanitarian response, and to that end, had worked for a decade in the Inter-Agency Working Group on Reproductive Health in Refugee Situations on the development of assessment tools, guidelines, protocols and programmes. Preliminary findings of a decade-long evaluation of developments in the provision of basic reproductive health care had shown that there had been much progress in the area of care for refugees, but that the situation remained serious for internally displaced persons. Treatment for victims of sexual violence remained well below required levels. UNFPA hoped that the recent IASC initiative for the development of comprehensive guidelines for the prevention and treatment of sexual and gender-based violence in emergency settings would mobilize more attention and resources for urgently needed work in that area.

60. **Ms. Gebre-Egziabher** (United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)) said that the increasing occurrence of natural and man-made disasters often forced countries to postpone national development programmes and exacerbated already precarious social, economic and environmental conditions. Nowhere were natural hazards more significant than in the cities, towns and villages of the world, where factors such as inappropriate land use, poorly designed and constructed buildings and infrastructure, and an increasingly degraded environment put human settlements at risk. As the lead agency within the United Nations system for coordinating activities in the field of shelter and human settlements and the focal point for local authorities, UN-Habitat played a leading role in disaster mitigation and post-disaster rehabilitation.

61. The Disaster Management Programme had been created to marshal resources to provide national and local governments, civil society and the private sector with practical strategies for mitigating and recovering from conflicts and natural disasters. The Programme also raised awareness among decision makers and communities on mitigation methodologies and rehabilitation in shelter and human settlements, and bridged the gap between relief and development by combining the technical expertise, normative understanding and lessons learned through field operations. Within the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs, UN-Habitat had affirmed its view that humanitarian response could benefit from an understanding of long-term perspectives at the earliest stages of intervention. In the achievement of its stated objectives, the Programme provided a combination of long-term technical and normative support through ongoing partnerships within the United Nations system and all Habitat Agenda partners.

62. Drawing on its experience in a number of post-conflict and disaster-prone countries and regions, including recent work in Afghanistan, UN-Habitat was ready to support countries with challenges anywhere in the world. It was actively engaged with the United Nations and other international entities in the work of

the secretariat of the International Decade for Disaster Reduction, including taking a leading role in the Inter-Agency Task Force on urban risk, and the collection of disaster vulnerability assessment tools.

63. **Mr. Sermoneta** (Observer for Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that Israel was surprised by certain allegations made by a previous speaker, especially since the speaker concerned represented a delegation that was involved in attempts to put the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians back on track. In that context, the blatant and inaccurate allegations against Israel were far from useful. His delegation failed to understand how the language used could contribute either to the progress of the peace process or to that particular Member State's role in it.

64. Israel shared the concern of the international community over the deterioration in the humanitarian situation in the region. Violence and terrorism, by their very nature, entailed hardships for civilian populations: Israeli and Palestinian civilians had both endured tremendous pain and suffering as a consequence of the upsurge in terrorism over the previous three years. Bringing that suffering to an end, and providing for the security and prosperity of all peoples in the region, were critical components of any successful peace initiative and therefore a prime objective of Israeli policy.

65. Israel had done its utmost to cooperate with international actors in an effort to facilitate their humanitarian work aimed at improving the living conditions of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Despite the unrelenting threat of terrorism that it confronted on a daily basis, Israel had consistently tried to permit the flow of people, goods and humanitarian assistance to the greatest extent possible. During 2003, there had been a notable increase in such cross-border movements.

66. While the Member State in question was well aware of the situation on the ground, its representative had not made even a token reference to the campaign of terrorism and indiscriminate violence facing Israelis daily, directed against innocent civilians, nor had he even alluded to the actions that Israel had taken to aid the Palestinians in their plight. Israel's efforts continued daily towards the goal of improving the situation. However, it was far easier to facilitate humanitarian aid without terror, which endangered not only Israeli soldiers and civilians, but also humanitarian workers and United Nations staff. Palestinian terrorists had consistently exploited any Israeli attempt to ease the conditions of the Palestinian people; they viewed measures to increase freedom of movement as opportunities to infiltrate Israeli cities, and used the immunity granted to medical and humanitarian vehicles to smuggle weapons and explosives, posing a threat not only to those they targeted, but also to those behind whom they hid.

67. Israel did not believe that the attention of the international community should be devoted solely to the welfare of Palestinian civilians in that conflict. Israeli citizens, including children suffering from terrorism, were no less deserving of concern. If the international community were serious about alleviating the humanitarian plight of the Palestinian people, the single most important thing it could do was to insist that the Palestinian leadership end its campaign of terror and incitement, as called for in the agreements signed and in the road map.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.